

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 10, 2014

Agenda Item: Elk Management in Areas with Brucellosis 2014 Work Plan—Local Modification

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background

In January 2013, the Commission endorsed elk management recommendations from a citizen working group for application in areas with brucellosis (Designated Surveillance Area as described by the Montana Department of Livestock). The Commission also endorsed a procedural requirement for annual work plans with an annual review in August. The 2013 work plan included hazing, fencing and dispersal hunts as management actions available for implementation. Examples of all three were applied in 2013. While recommendations from the citizen working group identified local working groups, such participation has been most present in the Paradise Valley.

A proposed 2014 work plan was presented on Aug. 8, 2013. That plan was assembled by FWP with input from the statewide working group that met in Bozeman last July. The 2014 plan included several modifications based upon 2013 experiences and had a renewed emphasis on local working groups. It was presented in such a way that any work plan refinements developed using local working group could be proposed at a future time.

The wildlife subcommittee of the Upper Yellowstone Watershed group has been hosting local deliberations on proposed modifications to the 2014 annual work plan. FWP has been assisting these discussions with MSU Extension providing facilitation and other meeting logistics. The meetings have been open to any interested party. Proposed modifications presented and adopted in February include additional private land fencing and later dates for lethal removals on private land. If approved by the Commission, work plan modifications generated by these Paradise Valley discussions would be available for use in the Paradise Valley in the 2014.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Public review and comment on the initial adoption ran through March 21. Forty-nine comments were received from the electronic public-comment site with additional email and hard copy comments also submitted and reviewed. Public comments include clear opposition to the proposed modifications and are provided to the Commission for their use in final decision making.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

In light of expressed concerns by the public, the recommendations have been adjusted in an effort to address concerns while still providing additional risk management tools in the Paradise Valley. An additional document is available with this cover sheet listing the specific proposed changes.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposals may or may not be adopted as proposed or with adjustment per staff justifications, public comment and/or Commission discussion.

Proposed Motion

I move to adopt the proposed 2014 annual work plan modifications for brucellosis-related elk management tools in the Paradise Valley as presented by FWP.